



# Show-Me Literacy

The "Official" Newsletter of Literacy in Missouri

Issue No. 101

September 2003



## Testing Service Addresses Essay FAQs

The following questions and answers summarize items referred to the GED Testing Service Writing Test Specialist regarding the essay requirements on the 2002-Series GED Language Arts, Writing Test.

### 1. How are the GEDTS Language Arts, Writing Test essays scored?

As of January 2002, GED Language Arts, Writing Test essays are scored on a 4-point holistic scale. Two trained essay readers read each essay and score based on the overall impression. The overall impression of each paper is based on five areas: Does the paper respond to the assigned prompt-did the examinee use the topic on the test? Can the reader see or follow an organized plan for development? Are there specific and relevant details to support the paper's focus? Are the conventions of language (grammar, usage, and mechanics) generally followed? Is the word choice precise, varied, and appropriate?

The two readers' scores are then averaged. If the essay receives a score of 2 or higher, the essay score is combined with the multiple-choice score to form a composite. If an examinee receives on the essay a score of "1" or "1.5," there will be no composite score, and the examinee must retake both the multiple choice and essay. Please note that individual essay scores are not reported. On the composite score, the multiple choice results represent 65% of

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Jeannie Gilbert (left), and Andrea Ball, staff of the AEL Program at Crowder College, presented "Focusing on the Kinesthetic/Tactual Learner, Ready to Use Ideas" at the MAACCE Conference.

## Conference Offers Variety of Learning Opportunities

Adult educators from AEL/ESL, Department of Corrections, Higher

Education, and Community Education converged on the The Lodge of Four Seasons June 10-12 for the annual MAACCE Conference.

Comedian/Humorist Motivational Speaker Juli Burney kicked off events at the Missouri Association for Continuing and Community Education Conference as the opening speaker on Tuesday afternoon.

Titled, "They Who Laugh, Last", Burney reminded attendees that non-traditional educators regularly contend with diversi-

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The mission of the "Show-Me Literacy" newsletter is to provide professional information-sharing, resources and news about adult education and literacy.

# From The State AEL Office

## Free Resource for Literacy Organizations

Verizon Literacy University (VLU) is a valuable free resource for your literacy organization. VLU has two major purposes: to help literacy organizations recruit, train and maximize the use of literacy volunteers who can share new skills, ideas, experiences and community contacts that make your program even more effective, and to support the unique information and training needs of program directors and staff. VLU accomplishes these purposes by using technology to: provide free online courses and other literacy resources that are available anywhere, any time; build a community of individuals and literacy organizations with common concerns and challenges; and create opportunities for visitors to suggest new courses, share ideas about their VLU experiences and express how the site might be improved. The URL for the Verizon Literacy University is <http://www.vluonline.org/>

## Library Web Site Provides Wealth of Information in One Place

[LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) breaks through the information overload of the Web and brings the best library and reference sites together with an insightful editorial--all in one user-friendly spot. Sites featured on [LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) are hand-selected and reviewed by its editorial team for exceptional quality, content and utility.

Published by StartSpot Mediaworks, Inc. in the Northwestern University/Evanston Research Park in Evanston, Ill., [LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) is the first in a family of vertical information portals designed to

make finding the best topical information on the Internet a quick, easy and enjoyable experience.

To date, [LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) has received more than 30 awards and honors. Most recently, [Forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com) selected [LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) as a "Forbes Favorite" site, the best in the reference category, and *PC Magazine* named it one of the Top 100 Web Sites. [LibrarySpot.com](http://www.libraryspot.com) has been featured on CNN, Good Morning America, CNBC and in many other media outlets. The URL is <http://www.libraryspot.com/about.htm>

## Prevent Child Abuse America Launches New Website

Healthy Families America works to prevent child maltreatment in families with children birth to five years old. This newly designed Web site has state-specific information, evaluation studies and information to help advocates and concerned citizens expand and improve these services that help support new families.

<http://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/home/index.shtml>

## Missouri GED Testing Statistics

During FY03 (July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003), 9,454 individuals took the GED Tests in Missouri. Of those, 7,186 or 76% were awarded a certificate of high school equivalence.

Sixty-six percent (66.4%) of those taking the test and 67.08% of those passing it participated to some extent in AEL classes. AEL students passed the test at a 76.8% rate, while 74.5% of the non-AEL students were successful.

### Missouri Students Passing the GED

Year	Total Statewide	AEL Students	Non-AEL Students
FY 98	10,084	7,139	2,945
FY 99	10,867	7,709	3,158
FY 00	10,310	7,070	3,240
FY 01	10,601	6,597	4,004
FY 02	9,291	5,078	4,213
FY 03	7,186	4,817	2,369

## FAQs

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the composite, and the essay represents 35%. Essay readers may not be more than one point apart in their scoring. In those cases where the readers are more than one point apart, the Chief Reader for the scoring site will set the score by agreeing with the reader whose score follows the GEDTS scale.

### 2. What is the passing score for the essay? Do some states have a higher essay passing score?

A GED candidate must earn a score of 2 or higher on the Language Arts, Writing, Part II essay in order to receive a composite score and obtain a passing score. A candidate needs a 2 or higher to earn a passing score. States may set a composite passing score (multiple-choice and essay) that is higher than the current GED passing score of 410. The composite passing score can not be set lower than the GEDTS standard.

### 3. When a score is received, how can the examinee tell if a 2 or higher was earned on the essay?

If a score on the transcript is in the range of 200-800 (but it will be a number less than 410), the examinee would have earned a 2 (minimum passing score on the 4-pt. scale) on the essay. However, the score was not high enough on the multiple-choice to pass to earn the composite passing score of 410. If a "0" or a single (\*) or (\*\*) asterisk is on the transcript, then a 2 was not earned on the essay. *Note:* A single asterisk (\*) indicates that the examinee did not write on the assigned topic, and the response was recorded as "off topic." If an essay score prevented passing, an examinee will still have to retake both parts of the Language Arts, Writing Test.

### 4. How do GED essay readers score papers? What is considered the most important elements of good writing?

Good writing needs focus, organization, and development with specific and relevant examples, details, explanations, etc. Essay readers are especially concerned with the development that supports a focus. Specific errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics are not looked for. Essay readers score approximately 30 papers in an hour; therefore, "read and score" is the motto of an essay reader. Errors in grammar, etc. would affect a score only if they are so numerous and hinder the reader from understanding and following the writer's ideas.

## TOTALLY

**E** News and  
**C** notes from the  
**H** Missouri Adult  
**N** Education &  
**O** Literacy  
**L** Technology  
**O** Center.  
**G** **Technology**  
**Y** **staff:**  
Jamy Preul,  
Jason Ralls,  
and  
Phyllis Shelby  
**Director:**  
John Stains

## Preparing Computers for New School Year



Jamy Preul

As the new school year begins, there are a few things you can do with the computers to prepare for a great start.

1. Clean your computers and spruce them up a bit. Computers attract dust, and with so many different hands on the keyboards, the keyboards tend to hang onto dust and grime. You might try alcohol saturated cotton balls to clean the keyboards. A slightly damp soft cloth will collect the dust from your screen and top of the computers. If you have headsets, wipe them with alcohol swabs. If your headsets have spongy covers over the ear pieces, remove them and wash in soapy water.

2. While dusting the computers, do not forget the cardreader and the printer.  
3. Additional cleaning for the cardreader includes sending a test card with alcohol daubed up the middle through the machine. This can be done by preparing a blank card and switching the "continuous feed" dipswitch to on. By running this card through the feeder a couple of times, some of the pencil lead will be removed from the rollers inside the machine.  
4. What about clearing some of the students' names from the computers? If you are using PLATO, SkillsBank4, or BLS-Tutorsystems, students' records can be downloaded onto a disk. Before doing this, please print off a report which shows the lessons and scores for each student. After downloading to a disk, then remove the students' name from the system.  
5. To clear students from the TABS system, a different process is required. You may get a copy of the directions for this process from the MO AEL Tech Center in Trenton.  
Contact Jamy Preul at 573-445-9703 or email [aelcentral@socket.net](mailto:aelcentral@socket.net) for more information or questions.

### 5. Will a specific number of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics lower an essay score?

Readers spend approximately 2 minutes per essay, reading for an overall impression. The points on the scoring grid shape that overall impression. If there are a sufficient number of errors (this number will differ from reader to reader) causing the reader to have difficulty understanding and following the writer's ideas, then those combined errors will affect the score.

### 6. What will the essay topic ask the examinee to do? Are past writing test topics available? Is preparation needed for the essay?

Examinees will be asked to write on a topic of general interest. The topics are brief and generally ask the examinees to state their views and support with examples from their own observation, knowledge, and/or experience.

Topics are not released; however, Steck-Vaughn produces the Official GED Practice Tests, and have materials to help GED teachers and candidates prepare.

### 7. The Official GED Practice Test essay question was not really a question.

The "Essay Question," is really a prompt to help examinees begin to write about a topic. All topics are general enough so that only ones' knowledge, experience, or observations are needed to respond.

### 8. Does GEDTS offer programs to help prepare GED candidates to write essays for the test? Where can examinees get help with writing essays?

GEDTS only develops the tests for the states and Canadian provinces and does not offer test preparation. Examinees

FAQs  
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## MAACCE

(Continued from Page 1)

ty and change. Although educators do not always have control of what is happening around them, they can have control over their response to what is happening. Burney said this is when humor becomes not only a valuable coping tool, but also an effective communication and education tool as well. She added that those who laugh have the ability to last through most anything and encouraged educators to "discover their own delightfulness!"

### Wednesday

Forty-nine presenters were on-hand Wednesday offering five sets of concurrent sessions--for a total of 36 workshops--geared towards all of the categories and professional development.

The "Whole Lot of Shakin' Going On" Banquet and Awards Ceremony was held Wednesday evening, offering a time full of great food, entertainment, dancing, prizes and fun.

Award recipients for 2002-03 were: Newcomer Award--Jody Ritter; Award of Merit--Kim Warren; Distinguished Service Award--Lois McQuitty; Don Fancher Outstanding Educator Award--Alice Jensen; and Special Achievement Award--Diane Schroeder.

### Thursday

Category meetings were held Thursday morning prior to "The Platters" breakfast and annual MAACCE business meeting and new officer installation.

Closing the conference was speaker Kathy Frederking, director of Lewis & Clark Career Center in St. Charles and part-time instructor for the Central Missouri State Vocational Leadership Academy. Frederking also served as MAACCE President for 2002-03.

In her speech "What a Difference a Day Makes", Frederking recounted the day of her traumatic accident a year ago and the impact it has made in her life. She shared her remarkable story of courage and faith,

surviving a time of mental, spiritual and physical challenges, and how one's outlook on life can change in an instant.

### 2004, 2005 Conferences

The MAACCE Board and Planning Committee have scheduled the 2004 conference for June 16-18; the 2005 conference will be held June 22-24. Both will

be at Tan-Tar-A Resort at Lake of the Ozarks. Sites are being researched for 2006. Anyone interested in helping plan next year's conference can contact Board President Wendy Myers at 636/239-7777; [wendy.myers@washington.k12.mo.us](mailto:wendy.myers@washington.k12.mo.us) or President Elect Jay Acocock 573/522-6727 [wacocock@mail.dese.state.mo.us](mailto:wacocock@mail.dese.state.mo.us)



**Loyce Hamilton, a former AEL student and SLPS GED recipient, and now attorney with the Public Defenders office, was one of the keynote speakers for the St. Louis Public Schools Adult Education and Literacy Graduation, Citizenship, and Volunteer Recognition Ceremony.**

## *Graduates, Volunteers Honored at Recognition Ceremony*

St. Louis Public Schools Adult Education and Literacy held its annual Graduation, Volunteer, and Citizenship Recognition Thursday June 5, 2003 at the Mildred Bastion Theater St. Louis Community College.

The theme this year was Vision: Changing Dreams to Reality and more than 400 AEL clients, family and special guests were in attendance. The event was held to honor those individuals who have earned their GED Certificates, passed the U.S. Citizenship Test, and volunteered their services as tutors in the SLPS Adult Education and Literacy Program. Graduates, new citizens, volunteers, and their guests enjoyed an inspirational evening that included guest speakers, a musical selection, and pres-

entation of certificates and awards.

Keynote speaker was Loyce Hamilton, a former AEL student and SLPS GED recipient, and now an attorney with the Public Defenders Office. In addition to Ms. Hamilton, this year's speakers included Linda Hays, Supervisor for AEL, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Mike Evans, AEL Advisory Board; Michelle Syc, Valedictorian; Aaron Goodloe, saluatorian; and Fanya Epshteyn, special citizenship honoree.

Presentation of certificates to the class of

**Ceremony**  
**Continued on Page 5**



**Honored participants of the St. Louis AEL Program, from left, include: graduate Nancy Brooks, instructors Harva Kennedy and Cynthia Boone, and graduates Darren Clinkscale, Michelle Syc, and Meisha Fortner.**

## St. Louis AEL Program Recognized by City Officials

The Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis honored the St. Louis Public Schools Adult Education and Literacy Program on June 20, 2003 recognizing their services and commitment to the community.

The Honorable Lewis Reed, Alderman of the 6th Ward, and Honorable Irene J. Smith, Alderwoman of the 1st Ward, introduced the resolution recognizing the recent graduating class of 2003. St. Louis Public Schools AEL had recently held its annual Graduation, Citizenship and Volunteer Recognition on June 6 at the Mildred Bastian Theatre at St. Louis Community College-Forest Park.

Several adult education instructors and graduates were individually recognized with resolutions and publicly presented before the Board of Aldermen. These included graduates Aaron Goodloe, Michelle Syc, Silas Brown, Chris Jackson, Meisha Fortner, Nancy Brooks, and Darren Clinkscale as well as AEL teachers Cynthia Boone, Harva Kennedy, and Henry Loving. Michelle Syc, a graduate from Ferguson Florissant Even Start and one of this year's salutatorians, spoke to the assembled board members as did teachers Cynthia Boone and Harva Kennedy.

The Resolution noted the exceptional quality of St. Louis Public Schools AEL

and its dedication to providing "an excellent educational opportunity" for residents of the St. Louis Metropolitan area. It recognized students, volunteers, staff, and teachers and in particular noted the "significant personal obstacles" graduates must overcome and "incredible sacrifices" they make in order to achieve their goals.

*Submitted by: Mary Kramer, Literacy Coordinator, SLPS*

### Ceremony (Continued from Page 1)

2002-2004 culminated the evening.

Volunteers providing over 120 hours of tutoring assistance to AEL students were recognized for their contributions. Volunteers who contributed more than 100 hours to the program also received special awards.

*Submitted By: Rhonda Jones - Instructor, Graduation Chair, SLPS*

### FAQs (Continued from Page 3)

are strongly urged to enroll in a review course (local AEL class) and take the official GED practice test so feedback

on writing can be obtained.

### 9. How long does the essay have to be?

An essay score is not based on a word count. For the 2002 series GED tests, the suggested word count was omitted. The word count was intended as a guide, not a requirement, however, GEDTS found that examinees were focusing more on the count than the presentation and development of ideas. In fact, writers would record the number of words at points in the text. The only requirement for the essay's length is that it must be written on the two sides of the answer sheet. Essay readers will not read additional pages.

### 10. Writing textbooks do not always agree on the same point. For example, one book instructs writers to use a comma after each item in a series (e.g. coffee, eggs, juice, and toast), but another book might instruct writers to omit the last comma before the conjunction (e.g. coffee, eggs, juice and toast.). Which is correct?

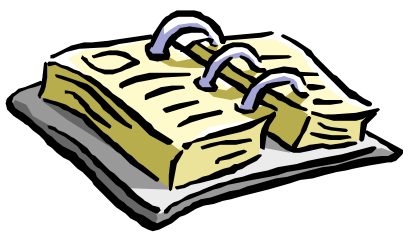
Both of the comma use instances cited are correct. Most English teachers will agree that the comma before the "and" is optional; however, the writer must be consistent. When readers are reading the essays for a score, they are looking for an overall impression, not individual errors.

### 11. The GEDTS essay scoring guide refers to "the conventions of EAE." What is EAE?

Edited American English (EAE) is fundamentally the same as Standard Written English (SWE), i.e. those conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics that writers and speakers adhere to in order to effectively communicate.

In 1997, the Writing Test Specifications Committee, in planning for the 2002-Series GED Tests, aligned itself with the National Council of Teachers of English who use EAE as the norm for the variety of English that is most used by educated speakers of the language. For writers, the significance is that they must still employ a style, grammar, and usage that allows a mutual level of comprehension and understanding among educated speakers and writers.

For further information, contact John Reier, GEDTS Writing Test Specialist One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 250 Washington, DC 20036, 202/ 939-9480 [john\\_reier@ace.nche.edu](mailto:john_reier@ace.nche.edu).



# Show-Me...

## What's Happening

### **Celebrate Literacy 2003 ProLiteracy Worldwide Conference**

Washington, D.C.  
November 14-17, 2003  
Hyatt Regency Washington on  
Capitol Hill  
[www.proliteracy.org](http://www.proliteracy.org)

### **52nd National American Adult and Continuing Ed. Conference (AAACE)**

Detroit, Mich.  
November 19-22, 2003  
[www.aaace.org](http://www.aaace.org)  
Merry Malfroid: [malfroid@triton.net](mailto:malfroid@triton.net)  
or  
Pat Drabant:  
[patdrabant@hotmail.com](mailto:patdrabant@hotmail.com)

### **2004 COABE National Conference**

The Commission on Adult Basic  
Education (COABE) and the Ohio  
Association for Adult and  
Continuing Education (OAACE)  
April 24 - 28, 2004  
Columbus, Ohio  
<http://www.coabe04.org/>

### **MAEL PDC BTW Schedule**

The Missouri AEL  
Professional Development  
Center at North Central  
Missouri College, Trenton,  
announces the Beginning  
Teacher Workshop (BTW)  
schedule. Completion of a  
BTW is required for initial AEL  
teacher certification.  
Preregistration is required. All  
workshops will be held at the  
Capital Plaza Hotel in  
Jefferson City. **For more  
information, contact the  
center at (660) 359-3948 or  
[maelpdc@mail.ncmissouri.edu](mailto:maelpdc@mail.ncmissouri.edu)**

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Nov. 22-23	Nov. 10
*Dec. 13-14	Dec. 1
Jan. 24-25	Jan. 12
March 13-14	March 1
May 8-9	April 26

\*The December 13-14 BTW  
will be held at another loca-  
tion. Details TBA.

Day 1 agenda is from 8 a.m.  
to 5:15 p.m. with breakfast  
and lunch included; Day 2  
agenda is from 7:30 a.m. to  
noon with breakfast included.

### **Show-Us... Your Stuff!**

If you have comments,  
questions, or story ideas,  
please send them to  
Cheryl Harlan, Editor:

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*Digital photos requested;  
regular photos will be scanned.*

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